

Statistics in focus

POPULATION AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS

THEME 3 — 1/1999

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Slightly fewer births and deaths in 1998

After five years of decline, the number of babies born in the European Union increased somewhat in 1996 and remained stable in 1997. Based upon monthly data available at the beginning of 1999, the number of live births in 1998 is estimated to decrease again, from 4.05 to around 4.01 million.

The number of deaths is expected to decrease from 3.71 to around 3.69 million. This will result in a probable decrease in natural population growth (live births minus deaths) within the EU from 336 000 in 1997 to 319 000 in 1998. When related to the total population, natural growth would amount to nearly 0.1 %. In 1995 a post-war low was recorded of 278 000.

This bulletin provides 'best guestimates' or 'now-casts' on live births and deaths for the calendar year just finished. Provisional birth and death counts for the year 1998 are due in mid-1999. At the same time, 1998 estimates will become available for the total fertility rate and life expectancy at birth as well as for the total number of the other component of population growth, net international migration (immigration minus emigration).

Decline in live births resumes

In 1998 the number of births in the EU is expected to reach a level of just over 4 million. This is about the same as in 1995 when a post-war low was recorded of 4.01 million. In the mid-1960s the annual number of live births was over 2 million higher, but during the period 1965 to 1975 fertility dropped dramatically (Figure 1).

In the near future the number of births will probably continue to decrease as the large number of women born in the mid-1960s 'baby boom' move out of the peak childbearing ages and are replaced by the smaller number of women born during 1965 to 1975, the 'baby-busters'.

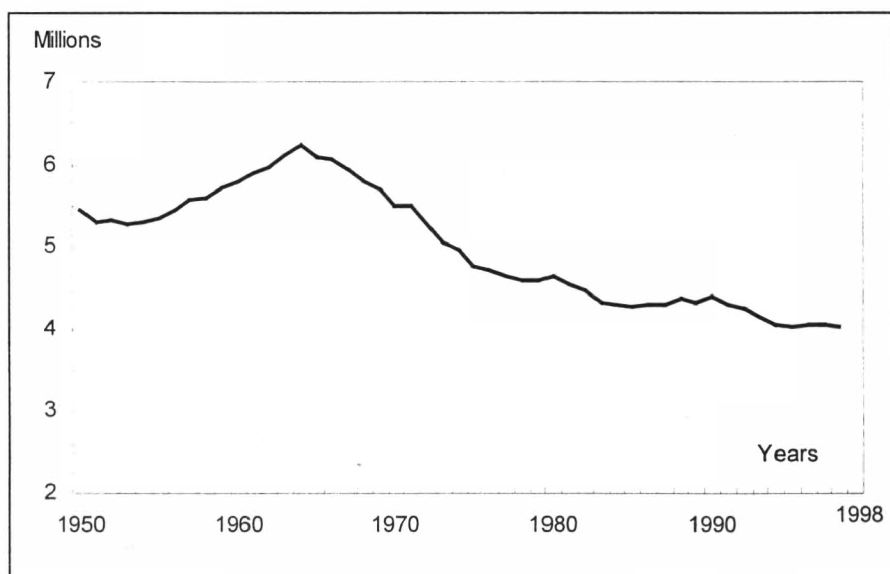


Figure 1: Live births in EU-15

Deaths continue to decline

In 1976 the number of deaths in the EU reached a post-war high of almost 3.8 million. Thereafter, the annual number of people that died fluctuated and decreased somewhat to ultimately a level of 3.7 million (Figure 2). The impact of a growing number of elderly people on deaths was fully compensated by decreasing mortality rates.

For 1998, it is also expected that the effects of population ageing will be counterbalanced by a further decrease in mortality rates.

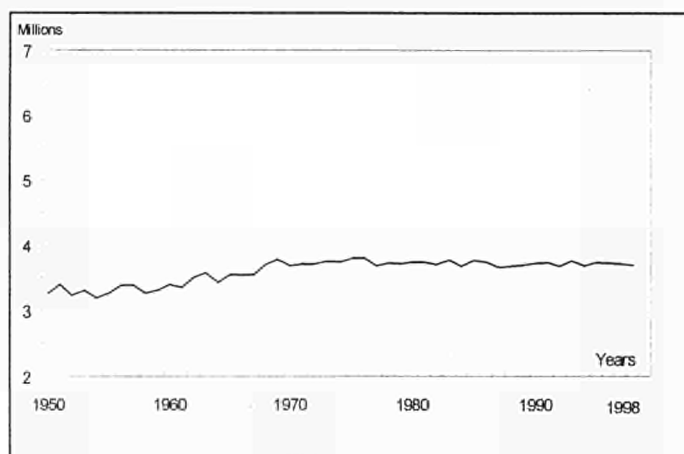


Figure 2: Deaths in EU-15

Table 1: Demographic 'now-casts' for 1998 ⁽¹⁾

Country	Observed (up to and including)	Live births	Deaths	Natural change	Live births	Deaths	Natural change
		(1 000)			(per 1 000 population)		
EU-15		4 007.5	3 687.7	319.9	10.7	9.8	0.9
EUR-11		3 038.4	2 823.3	215.1	10.4	9.7	0.7
Belgium	September	114.2	103.9	10.3	11.2	10.2	1.0
Denmark	September	66.2	58.3	7.9	12.5	11.0	1.5
Germany	October	776.5	848.0	- 71.5	9.5	10.3	- 0.9
Greece	May	98.3	99.6	- 1.2	9.4	9.5	- 0.1
Spain ⁽²⁾	-	364.7	350.7	14.0	9.3	8.9	0.4
France	September	743.0	542.5	200.5	12.7	9.2	3.4
Ireland	June	52.0	31.5	20.5	14.1	8.5	5.5
Italy	June	530.1	569.5	- 39.4	9.2	9.9	- 0.7
Luxembourg	September	5.4	3.8	1.6	12.8	9.0	3.8
Netherlands	November	199.0	137.2	61.8	12.7	8.8	4.0
Austria	October	81.6	78.7	2.9	10.1	9.7	0.4
Portugal	September	114.6	107.7	6.9	11.5	10.8	0.7
Finland	October	57.4	49.8	7.5	11.1	9.7	1.5
Sweden	October	89.2	92.6	- 3.4	10.1	10.5	- 0.4
United Kingdom	June	715.3	613.9	101.5	12.1	10.4	1.7
Iceland	November	4.2	1.8	2.4	15.4	6.7	8.7
Liechtenstein	-	0.4	0.2	0.2	12.7	7.0	5.7
Norway	September	59.2	43.9	15.3	13.4	9.9	3.5
EEA		4 071.3	3 733.6	337.7	10.7	9.8	0.9
Switzerland	August	77.2	63.3	13.9	10.9	8.9	2.0

⁽¹⁾ Estimates are primarily based upon provisional monthly data series available at the beginning of 1999 (see second column). Technical details about the methodology used can be found in Eurostat Working Paper E4/1997-7.

⁽²⁾ National estimates.

No uniform demographic picture for 1998

With regard to live births, EU Member States will not all be moving in the same direction during 1998. In Germany, Greece, Austria and Finland the decrease is expected to be considerable. France and the Netherlands, on the other hand, will probably see a significant rise in the number of births (Figure 3).

Ireland will remain the EU country with the highest crude birth rate, whereas Italy will probably have the lowest level (see Table 1).

Concerning deaths, most EU countries have had a 'good' year. Only France, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal and Finland will probably be confronted with a moderate growth in the number of deaths (Figure 4).

Due to an aged population and a relatively less favourable mortality pattern, Denmark will continue to be the EU Member State with the highest crude death rate. Ireland is the Member State most likely to have the lowest level (see Table 1).

Finally, natural population change is expected to remain negative in Germany, Greece, Italy and Sweden (see Table 1). However, probably all these countries will experience a population increase due to a substantial net inflow of international migrants.

Ireland is most likely to remain the EU country with the highest crude natural population growth levels.

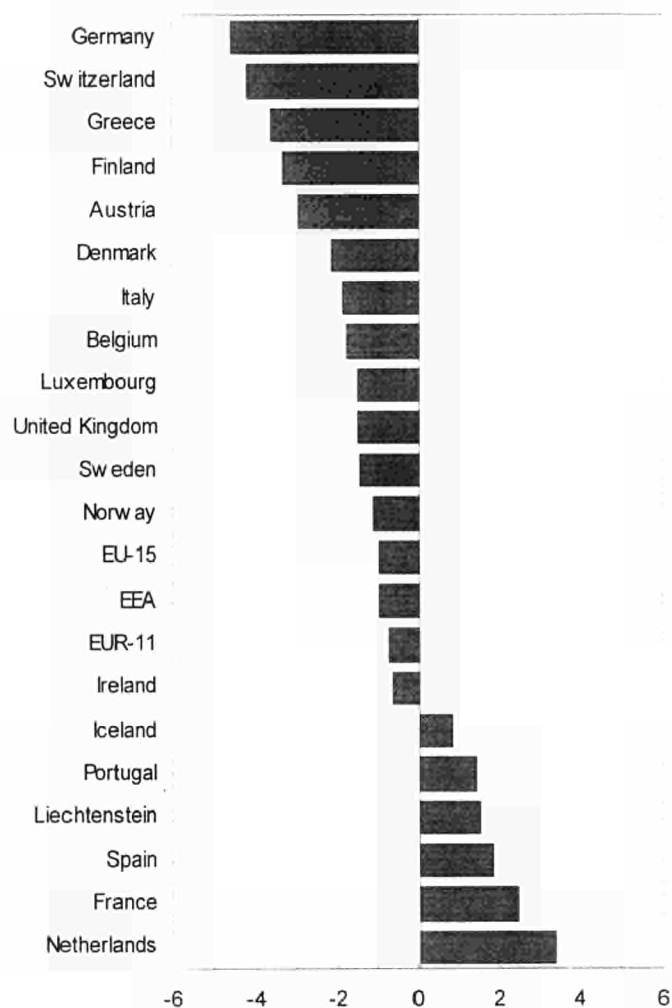


Figure 3: Live births — relative differences between 1997 and 1998 (%)

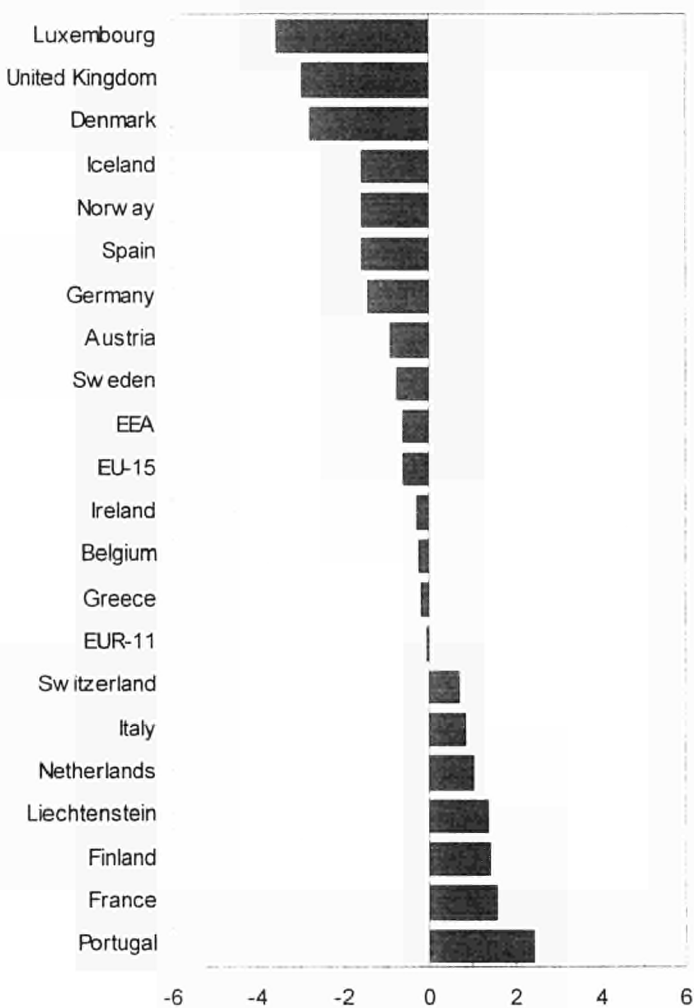


Figure 4: Deaths — relative differences between 1997 and 1998 (%)

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